

is meant the method of debate or dialogue, "counting heads instead of breaking them", with spokesmen of the minority or minorities participating as well on equal terms. It is an important aspect of the democratic method that everyone takes part in the 'dialogue' which precedes the taking of decisions. In other words, democracy is government by discussion, or government by peaceful persuasion. In view of the above argument, it is preferable to define democracy in terms of its whole procedure, and to emphasise the principle of dialogue before the principle of numbers.

The first American President at the speech in Gettysburg encapsulated the essence of democracy when he defined it as the "government of the people, by the people and for the people". To this was added the resolve that it would not perish from the earth. Democracy is the government of the people because it has the support of the people who give it legitimate status. Elections make it possible for the people to elect their representative people's representatives. The irony is that even if the election is rigged those who form the government claim this legitimacy. True that the idea of government by the people, when superficially viewed, sounds preposterous, for in a democracy like India, the government cannot be run by millions of people. They cannot be expected to meet to make laws collectively as the people in the Greek city-states did over two thousand years ago. In a complex modern state the idea of government by the people is realised through representatives. In fact electorates do not anticipate the Greek style and are satisfied with such control over the activities of the government made possible by the representatives who belong to different political parties. Government for the people is government in the best interest of the people. However, the sad fact remains that there have been those representatives who ignored their responsibility to the people and used the mandate given them for self-aggrandizement.

Direct Democracy

In a direct democracy, the people themselves express their will on public affairs. They formulate and express their will in a mass meeting. In the small city-states of ancient Greece and Rome all adult male citizens were expected to meet together in the Assembly. Pure democracy has not been confined to the ancient world. Its surviving relics are found today in the Swiss "landsgemeinde" or popular legislature. Direct democracy can exist and function only in small states with a limited, homogeneous population where people can conveniently meet and deliberate together. In large complex societies, when the number of the people is too large and the area of the state is too extensive, direct democracy is impracticable.

Indirect or Representative Democracy

Indirect democracy is so called because citizens elect their representatives to govern on their behalf. Authority resides in the people, but it is exercised by the representatives. People elect their representatives for a term. The representatives, after the expiry of the term, report back to the electorate to seek a new term. People on their part have to determine if those representatives should continue for another term. This system ensures that there is harmony of purpose between the government and the governed. There is a tendency among people to form groups and to exert pressure on the elected representatives. This may be good in so far as it aims to convey their sentiments, but the practice should not get out of hand. Intelligent and well-meaning people devoted to the betterment of the people should be allowed to exercise knowledge and analysis in an atmosphere of calm, and objectivity. In a modern state indirect democracy should have three main elements: the Electorate, the Parliament and the Executive.